WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A real-time contents editing method for editing a large number of images, including live images, and/or voices which are present in a dispersed fashion on the Internet, and distributing the edited images and/or voices to a plurality of users, the method comprising:

providing a plurality of video cameras each serving as an input device, a plurality of distribution modules each adapted to code an input image taken by a corresponding video camera, by use of a coding standard which enables coding while selecting one of a plurality of coding algorithms and to distribute the coded input image, a plurality of receiving modules each adapted to receive and display the distributed image, and at least one editing module; and

causing each distribution module to change, in accordance with the performance level of a machine to be used, the kind and use frequency of a video object plane (VOP) to be used, to thereby select a coding algorithm which enables highly efficient compression.

2. A real-time contents editing method according to claim 1, wherein processes for coding the input image are divided into basic processes and auxiliary processes; a coding execution time of each of the basic and auxiliary processes is measured; and the kind and use frequency of a video object plane (VOP) to be used is changed on the basis of results of the measurement.

3. A real-time contents editing system for editing a large number of images, including live images, and/or voices which are present in a dispersed fashion on the Internet, and distributing the edited images and/or voices to a plurality of users, the system comprising:

a plurality of video cameras each serving as an input device;

a plurality of distribution modules each adapted to code an input image taken by a corresponding video camera, by use of a coding standard which enables coding while selecting one of a plurality of coding algorithms and to distribute the coded input image;

a plurality of receiving modules each adapted to receive and display the distributed image; and

at least one editing module,

wherein each distribution module changes, in accordance with the performance level of a machine to be used, the kind and use frequency of a video object plane (VOP) to be used, to thereby select a coding algorithm which enables highly efficient compression.

4. A real-time contents editing system according to claim 3, wherein the performance of the machine is determined through monitoring a time required to execute a process; and an appropriate one of the plurality of coding algorithms is selected on the basis of a result of the monitoring.

5. A real-time contents editing system according to claim 4, wherein the monitoring of a time required to execute a process is performed through measurement, in the system, of a time required for coding of a video object plane (VOP); and a determination as to whether inter-frame compression should take place is made on the basis of the measured time and a predetermined average frame rate.

6. A real-time contents editing system according to claim 3, wherein the coding standard is the MPEG-4 standard.

7. A real-time contents editing system according to claim 3, wherein the editing module is adapted to request a distribution server to multicast the images and/or voices, and is adapted to generate and multicast a scene description language to be transmitted to a plurality of clients.

8. A real-time contents editing system according to claim 3, wherein the coding process according to the selected coding algorithm is carried out in a step-by-step manner such that required minimum coding is completed after lapse of a predetermined time, whereupon an auxiliary coding process of enhanced resolution and compression rate is carried out; and if a relevant auxiliary coding process is not completed when a limited period of time has elapsed, the auxiliary coding process is interrupted, and the result of the coding process

in an immediately preceding step is distributed.

9. A real-time contents editing program for editing a large number of images, including live images, and/or voices which are present in a dispersed fashion on the Internet, and distributing the edited images and/or voices to a plurality of users,

the program being adapted to a system comprising a plurality of video cameras each serving as an input device, a plurality of distribution modules each adapted to code an input image taken by a corresponding video camera by use of a coding standard which enables coding while selecting one of a plurality of coding algorithms and to distribute the coded input image, a plurality of receiving modules each adapted to receive and display the distributed image, and at least one editing module; and

the program causing each distribution module to change, in accordance with the performance level of a machine to be used, the kind and use frequency of a video object plane (VOP) to be used, to thereby select a coding algorithm which enables highly efficient compression.